



SPECIAL OPS Survivors

Embracing & Empowering Survivors of Our Fallen Heroes.

NEWS UPDATE

October 2018

SOS Celebrates 15 Years of Embracing and Empowering Survivors of Fallen Heros

The Special Ops Survivors (SOS) story began 15 years ago when Navy SEAL Nick Rocha received word that a fellow Navy SEAL, Neil Roberts, had died in combat in the mountains of Afghanistan. Nick was inspired to do something to help take care of the Fallen Hero's family who was left behind.



Nick cut out a newspaper article from Navy Times of Neil, made up a flyer, and asked the owner of a local Coronado, California bar if he would agree to host a fundraiser in Neil's honor. The owner agreed, and the fundraiser yielded nearly \$1,100. Even though no further solicitations were made, donations kept coming in. Before long, \$2,900 had been raised for Neil's wife and child.

A Los Angeles businessman, Eric Knirk, heard about the fundraiser and saw the potential to take the idea even bigger and benefit other surviving spouses of Navy SEALs. Eric reached out to Nick and "Frog Friends" was established in 2001. Frog Friends' mission was to provide support to surviving spouses of Navy SEALs, but that was quickly expanded to include surviving spouses of all Special Operations Forces (SOF) given that other SOF members lost their lives the same day as Neil. The expanded initiative was called the United Warrior Survivors Foundation.

A Growing Need The need for support for surviving spouses grew after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, with more than 360 Special Operations personnel lost in Operation Iraq Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, according to the United States Special Operations Command. Today, there are SOS survivors in thirty-eight states in the USA and three countries.

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2018 UPCOMING EVENTS

- OCT 18-20** 15th Anniversary Celebration
Olympic Valley, CA
- NOV 10** Emerald Coast Honor Games
Destin, FL
- NOV 10-11** Fenway Park – Spartan Race
Boston, MA
- NOV 11-12** 15th Annual Veterans Day
Charity Golf Tournament
Suffolk, VA
- NOV 17** 1st Annual MSG Mark McCowan
Memorial Fishing Tournament
Lake Norman, Mooresville, NC
- DEC 15** Queen Bee Designs Charity
Holiday Show & Sale
Alexandria, VA

2019 UPCOMING EVENTS

- FEB 23** 5th Annual Allain
Bowling Tournament
Worcester, MA
- MAR 15-17** Bass Master Classic
Knoxville, TN

If you'd like to learn more about SOS, or make a donation, visit our website at specialopssurvivors.org.



SOS Celebrates 15 Years *continued*

Special Ops Survivors As demand for survivor support grew, the United Warrior Foundation saw a name change to Special Operations Survivors as the organization continued to evolve to meet the ever-expanding and changing needs of surviving spouses. The organization expanded its eligibility criteria to go back to January 1, 1980 to cover Survivors from the inception of U.S. Special Operations Command and all of the fallen SOF members in previous conflicts. It also expanded to cover the ever-growing loss of life outside of just training or combat to include deaths related to symptoms from PTSD, TBI, Cancer, Suicide, off-duty related casualties, and injuries or illnesses that may have manifested years later after a SOF member left the service. As Nick explains, “the name Special Ops Survivors is more reflective of who we are as an organization and the people we serve. The name underscores our commitment to embrace and empower the spouses of our Fallen Heroes. The Surviving Spouses served our country by raising the kids and standing by their hero during multiple deployments and when he paid the ultimate sacrifice, these women need us more, NOT less. We didn’t want to penalize certain women because their husbands didn’t ‘die the right way’ in training or combat because that’s not the only way these Fallen Heroes go. I think most American’s understand that need and we are grateful to our donors, volunteers,

and SOS staff that truly understand the healing power of not having to weather a tragedy alone.”

Throughout its 15-year history, Special Ops Survivors has tailored programs and services to meet the expressed needs of those it serves. The organization’s mission provides for the development of strong, engaged relationships with individual survivors, and

programs that expand in direct response to their needs. Feedback directly from survivors and ongoing program assessment is a core part of the organization’s work.

Today, SOS is the only organization exclusively dedicated to serving survivors of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Special Operations personnel who have died in combat or training or service-related illness or injury even after retirement.

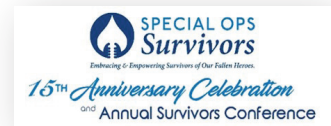
What started with a fundraiser in a bar in Coronado, California has grown into an organization that embraces and empowers survivors to build healthy, post-loss futures as they transition to

“There are two things that saved me.... my kids and Special Ops Survivors. I do not know what I would have done without them.”

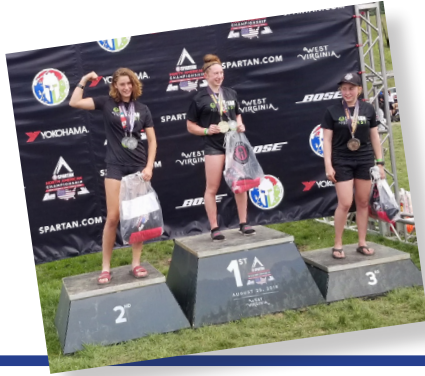
their new lives. SOS provides individual, group, and peer-to-peer emotional support, childcare grant funding, education, and career advancement grants, and emergency financial aid.

As a current member Emeritus of the SOS Board of Directors, Nick continues his commitment to the organization he founded and the surviving spouses it serves with his dedication to fundraising. An active duty Navy SEAL with more than 24 years of service, and nine overseas deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations, Senior Chief Rocha has had a very distinguished career.

But it’s Nick’s efforts off the battlefield, and his heart for and commitment to military and survivor causes that have had a profound and life-changing effect on hundreds of survivor families. As Camille, surviving spouse of a Special Operations Army Fallen Hero said, “There are two things that saved me....my kids and Special Ops Survivors. I do not know what I would have done without them.”



Donations to SOS are welcome and can be made at: specialopssurvivors.org



Running To Spread the News About SOS is a Sims Family Affair!

Finding Your Passion When 51-year-old Pennsylvania mom Janet Sims committed to her first race in 2015, she never imagined how running would transform her and her family's lives. From that first race through a muddy terrain, Janet took on increasingly challenging obstacle courses, hiking up ski slopes in summer, carrying logs across the rough mountain terrain, scaling eight-foot walls and scrambling under barb wire fences. According to Janet, the Killington, Vermont race offered even more thrills, "14.3 miles straight up 4,000 feet!"

Janet discovered that she enjoyed the challenge, the variety of races, and most importantly the opportunity to make real, emotional connections with other runners. The experience was so exhilarating she invited her daughters Natalie 15 and Samantha 13 to join her and face the challenges of the Spartan races, featuring extreme obstacles and considered some of the most difficult races.

"I knew I wanted my girls to get off the couch, put down the I-phone, and get that feeling of empowerment, belief in self, and sense of community that runners share. Traveling to these races, we set goals, get to know each other a little better, and prove that we have the grit to be a Spartan." Husband Andy would later join the team making it a Sims Family Affair. The Sims began to spend almost every weekend participating in some of the most challenging courses in the northeast.

SOS: A Purpose-Filled Run A chance encounter with an old friend, Jim, a Special Ops Veteran, kicked the Sims family into high gear, setting them on a new and exciting course that would change their lives forever. Jim told Janet about Special Ops Survivors (SOS), a non-profit organization dedicated to embracing and empowering survivors of Special Operations personnel. The goal of SOS is to help survivors build the healthy, fulfilling future their Fallen Hero would have wanted for them. Many present and former Special Ops personnel are sponsored by SOS in races across the country to bring greater awareness of SOS to a wider audience. The Sims family knew they wanted to get onboard.

"It was like a lightbulb went off in my head," said Janet. "With SOS as our sponsor, we could run and benefit others by getting the word out about the good work of SOS. We wear SOS hats. Tee-shirts honoring Fallen Heroes. And we participate in promotional efforts wherever we're needed." Because of the success Janet and her family have had in racing, they often find themselves on the podium at the finish of a race. "What greater platform to bring the story of SOS to life for a new audience," says Janet. "It's truly an honor to be able to show our appreciation for our Fallen Heroes." Natalie and Samantha echo their mom's sentiments. As Natalie explains, "I feel that this is an amazing program and an amazing opportunity. As for Samantha, she's just as enthusiastic, "it's a good cause and helps many people."



On the horizon....

Fenway Stadium Park Sprint Nov 11 & 12, 2018

The Sims are heading to Boston's legendary Fenway Park for the Fenway Park Stadium Sprint, and they'll be running for SOS. The course takes runners along the corridors of the Fenway stadium, up and down the stadium steps, and through the player locker rooms. It's a unique opportunity to run through the hallowed hallways of one of baseball's most famous stadiums. And runners at every level are welcome to join the fun. To register, runners can visit spartan.com

SOS will have a strong presence at the event. Neal Keohane, SOS Vice Chair will be the on-site host to celebrate the story of SOS. Everyone's invited to stop by and meet and greet the Special Ops volunteers and learn more about this amazing organization.

How does it feel to be able to volunteer to help SOS? Janet sums it up for her family, "We're making a difference with every run. We can't imagine doing anything better than combining our love of running and family with our commitment to honoring our Fallen Soldiers. I hope to see everyone out there for this exciting event at Fenway Park in November."



A Helping Hand for Special Ops Survivors Transitioning to a New Life

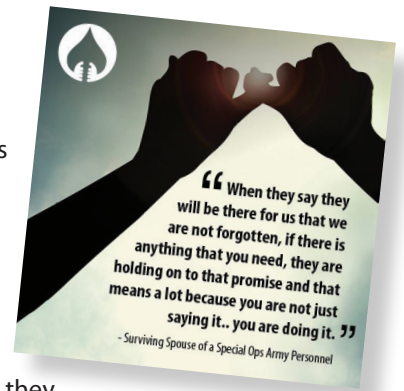
Building a New Future While SOS can't bring back a survivor's loved one, our core programs are designed to help ease the transition to a new life - a life that honors the legacy of their loved one. SOS does this by providing access to a community of other survivors who have gone through, survived and overcome similar obstacles. Our four core programs embrace and empower survivors to build healthy, post-loss futures as they transition to their new lives by providing individual, group, and peer-to-peer emotional support as well as individual financial support. Today, SOS programs are currently serving more than 250 survivors in 37 states and three countries.

Individual Emotional Support Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and special occasions - these can be particularly painful for survivors. SOS provides individual emotional support by reaching out to survivors with cards and special treats to recognize and celebrate important dates - letting them know they are not forgotten - and neither is their Fallen Hero.

Direct Financial Assistance The change in a family's financial situation can be particularly difficult after the loss of a loved one. SOS is able to step in with a helping hand and provide a limited amount of money to assist survivors who find themselves in difficult financial situations.

Career Advancement Grants SOS encourages and supports surviving spouses who want to advance their education and expand their career opportunities, so they can better care for their families. Grants are available for educational opportunities and career training.

Group Emotional Support Each year, our Survivors are invited to the Annual Survivor's Conference which brings survivors from across the country together in a safe space that is designed to empower survivors and foster healing and wellness, no matter where they



are in their post-loss journey. The Conference features emotional bereavement and educational seminars, peer mentor support, team building exercises, and bonding opportunities with other survivors who have gone through the same journey. The experience enables survivors to reconnect with old friends and meet and support those new to the SOS community. Survivors leave with new tools and coping skills that result in a positive change in their lives.

Survivors Need Your Help The number of survivors supported by SOS has increased a dramatic 200% in the last six years. To continue to support the increased demand and provide the resources needed for survivors to make that transition to a healthy, fulfilled new life, SOS needs your help. Donations are needed to continue the good work of SOS. Their Fallen Heroes gave everything for their country. Can you give to help their survivors? Please visit our website, specialopssurvivors.org to make your donation today.

"I cannot put into words how being able to get to know these other widows has helped me in my journey. We all have friends and family that we are close to and that talk to us and try to understand. But nothing compares to this network we have where we can say what may seem like the craziest thing and all get it!"
 -Surviving Spouse of Special Operations Army Personnel





The Mark McCowan Memorial Fishing Tournament Celebrating a life of Commitment, Sacrifice and Honor November 17, 2018

Every once in a while, a hero comes along who touches and transforms the lives of those around them. Master Sergeant Mark A. McCowan, 4th Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) was a hero in every sense of the word. A loving husband, devoted father, attentive son, rock-solid friend and decorated Green Beret.

He joined the United States Army in 1989, beginning his career as a Motor Transport Operator, then served in various positions while stationed in Mannheim, Germany and Fort Riley, Kansas before becoming a Special Forces Engineer Sergeant in 2001.

Mark was in the Special Forces group that led to the capture of Saddam Hussein. During his military career, he served in six combat deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. He received more than 40 military awards and decorations including two bronze star medals and the Iraqi Campaign medal. Mark passed away of natural causes at the age of 45 on February 9th, 2017, leaving behind his wife Candace McCowan, his four children, and his parents.

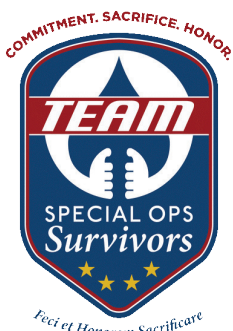
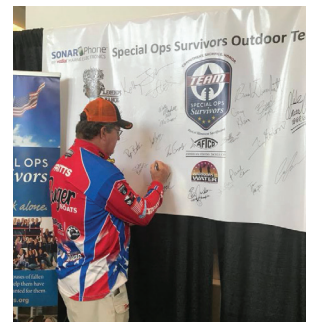
The Mark McCowan Memorial Fishing Tournament honors and celebrates this amazing man and the cause he believed in - Special Ops Survivors.

Team Special Ops Survivors During his life, Mark was an active member of TEAM Special Ops Survivors. SOS, with its donors and volunteers, is dedicated to supporting Gold Star spouses of our

Fallen Heroes and making sure surviving spouses receive as much support and resources like educational benefits and counseling as possible. Team SOS raises awareness about the organization and secures donations through athletic events and competitions. Mark's commitment to SOS was born on the battlefield. Mark would tell the story of how his life changed when he witnessed three fellow soldiers and one canine lose their lives during an attack in Afghanistan. When Mark had a chance to sit down with their surviving spouses, he said one thing became very clear - the impact of SOS on these families to provide necessary resources and critical support during the healing process. From that day forward, he committed himself to supporting SOS.

According to Veteran and Team SOS member Gary Malkin, "nobody loved to fish more than Mark. This gave Mark the idea to hold fishing tournaments that could generate donations and raise awareness of the needs for surviving spouses. It all began with the "Reel Men Fishing Team" tournaments a few years ago, then transitioning to the Team SOS. Mark was a natural leader and his ability to motivate participation in these events and remind our communities that our heroes are not forgotten was phenomenal."

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The Mark McCowan Memorial Fishing Tournament *continued*

As Veteran and member of Team SOS Michael Nadeau tells it, "Mark could do the work of ten guys. He would get on the phone from the time he got up to the time he went to bed to encourage participation and promoting awareness of our Team SOS events. But he always had time for his family. We'd be in the middle of a tournament and he'd be on the phone helping his kid with homework!"

Adds Malkin, "Mark was all about the community, especially the Special Ops community. I was working with Warriors on the Water (WOW) and we were searching for a way to increase participation in our annual fishing tournament to raise more funds for survivor families. But we weren't sure how to go about getting more boaters. One call to Mark and we had ten SOS boaters show up. The tournament was a huge success. And Mark won the tournament. It was to be the last one he participated in. After that, I became a sponsor for SOS."

Explains Nadeau, "we all wanted to honor and remember Mark. The Mark McCowan Fishing Tournament seemed the perfect answer - honoring Mark and the cause he loved. Each year, during Mark's tournament, we'll honor another Fallen Hero. We encourage everyone to participate in this year's tournament. And if you can't participate, please consider donating in Mark's name."

Sign Up Today!
Registration Now Open!

Presented by the Special Ops Survivors Outdoor Team
Nov 17, 2018

Guaranteed \$3,000 1st place with 100 boats
(prizes subject to change)

Location: Lake Norman, Queens Landing - Mooresville, NC

Time: First Flight - Safe Light to 3 pm

Format: 2 Man Team, 5 Fish Limit, 14 inch minimum

Entry Fee: \$150 per team and \$20 Big Fish Option
(60% payback and 100% Big Fish)

40% of Entry Fees and All Donations go to Special Ops Survivors





Helping Survivors Turn Tragedy Into Triumph The 2018 Annual Survivors Conference

Special Ops Survivors, the only nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to serving survivors of active duty Special Operations personnel who have died in combat or training or service related injury or illness, is hosting its Annual Survivor's Conference in October 2018.

SOS understands the healing power of not weathering a tragedy alone. When a member of America's Special Operations Forces dies, SOS is on the front lines embracing and empowering Gold Star spouses of our Fallen Heroes. The Annual Survivor's Conference brings survivors from across the country together in a safe space that is designed to empower survivors and foster healing and wellness, no matter where they are in their post-loss journey. The Mark McCowan Memorial Fishing Tournament honors and celebrates this amazing man and the cause he believed in - Special Ops Survivors.

Explains Terri Wallace, Executive Director of SOS, "We provide a retreat-style, nurturing and supportive environment in which our survivors can meet other survivors, feel a part of the community, embrace their common backgrounds, share their stories and continue to do the difficult work of turning tragedy into triumph."

Throughout the Conference, survivors are reminded that the sacrifices made by their loved ones are not forgotten and that their wellness is a priority. The Conference features emotional bereavement and educational seminars, peer mentor support, team building exercises, and bonding opportunities with other survivors who have gone through the same journey. The experience enables survivors to reconnect with old friends and meet and support those new to the SOS community. Survivors leave with new tools and coping skills that result in a positive change in their lives.

"But," points out Wallace, "the Conference is also a lot of fun, filled with plenty of joy and happiness. This year's Conference will celebrate the 15th anniversary of SOS with an evening of celebration, laughter and maybe even a few heartfelt tears down memory lane."

What Survivors Say Survivors who have attended past conferences comment on the transformative experience of being with other survivors, embracing their common backgrounds, and bonding with each other. Many have shared their experiences with SOS.

"When Special Ops Survivors say they will be there for us for anything we need and that we are not forgotten, they fulfill that promise. It means a lot because they are not just saying it, they are doing it."

Surviving Army Special Operations Spouse

"I didn't know I needed it, but I knew I was missing something. Five years from the date of John's death was my first survivors conference, and that was the start of my healing process."

Surviving Special Operations Air Force Spouse

"It had been a year since Paul died and I had not yet met any other widows or didn't want to meet any other widows and I met quite a few and that was amazing. Because there were all these people who were my age and my situation who were cool and fun. We had conferences about benefits, financial planning, ways to stay strong, ways to move forward but the biggest thing I got out of it was the camaraderie and being with people who were just like me."

Surviving Army Special Operations Spouse

Your Donations Are Needed! The Annual Survivors Conference would not be possible without the help of supporters and donors just like you. From board members who give of their time and expertise, to our dedicated donors and SOS Team members who fund our programs, it takes a whole community to make a positive impact on our family of surviving spouses. Your donations provide the emotional support and resources needed to ensure survivors live a healthy, post-loss future.

To learn more about Special Operations Survivors or to donate, visit specialopssurvivors.org. And thank you for your support



Combined Federal Campaign Names Special Ops Survivors Approved Charity

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, raises millions of dollars each year through almost 200 CFC campaigns across the country. The CFC provides an opportunity for military and civilian federal employees to support causes they believe in. This year, the CFC has again included Special Ops Survivors (SOS) as an approved charity for 2018. The campaign runs from September 1, 2018 through January 15, 2019.



SOS will appear on the donor list as a member of the Military Support Group of America, with a CFC code number of 96350. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign support eligible non-profit organizations like SOS that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world. The SOS CFC code number assures donors that monies intended for SOS reach the organization.

This is great news for SOS, a non-profit organization dedicated to embracing and empowering survivors of Special Operations personnel to help them build healthy, productive futures after the loss of their Fallen Heroes. Formed in 2002 by an active duty Navy SEAL, SOS is the only nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to serving survivors of active duty Army, Navy Air Force and Marine Special Operations personnel who have died in combat or training or as the result of injury or illness even after they retire.

Explains Terri Wallace, Executive Director, SOS, "while SOS cannot bring back a survivor's loved one, the organization's programs help survivors and their children ease the transition to a new life - a life that honors the legacy of their loved one."

Funds donated to SOS help provide targeted financial support, educational resources including career advancement grants, counseling, childcare grant funding and emergency financial aid for unexpected medical or household bills. Because survivors are bonded with other survivor families both by how their heroes died and by how they lived as Special Operations families, SOS hosts annual conferences for survivors to allow those bonds to continue to grow and flourish. "No survivor or their surviving family members ever pay for any services provided by SOS. They and their loved ones have already paid the ultimate price on the battlefield," emphasizes Wallace.

"We encourage every military and civilian federal employee who has an opportunity to donate through their workplace to consider SOS as a recipient of their donations. Our Fallen Heroes have given everything for their country. It would make such a difference if we could give what we can to their survivors in honor of their loved one and support them on the long journey back from the loss of their spouse."

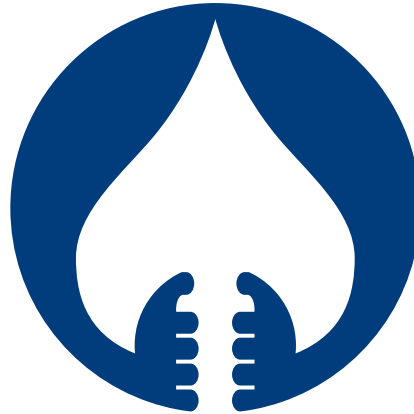
PLEDGE NOW

Between now and Jan 15, 2019, pledges can be made to Special Operations Survivors through an employee's local CFC office using code # 96350.

Local offices can be located through opm.gov/combined-federal-campaign/find-local-campaigns/locator. To learn more about Special Operations Survivors, visit specialopssurvivors.org.

Not a military or federal employee with a workplace giving option? Please consider making a donation directly to Special Operations Survivors at our website, specialopssurvivors.org.

**Celebrating 15 Years of
Embracing and Empowering
Survivors of Fallen Heros**



SPECIAL OPS SURVIVORS

“Embracing & Empowering Survivors of Our Fallen Heroes.”

specialopssurvivors.org

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